



Local Elections May 2023 - Volunteer Guide

Welcome! This is a short guide on how to use the period leading up to the local government elections as an opportunity to raise awareness of MND and the challenges people living with MND face locally.

Where councils are having elections this year, it's a great opportunity during the pre-election period for volunteers:

- a) to promote understanding of MND in general
- b) to raise awareness of housing adaptation issues (linking to our Act to Adapt campaign)
- c) to raise awareness of the issues carers with MND face (linking to our Support MND Carers' campaign)

Reaching out to candidates before the election can mean that afterwards councillors are receptive to a conversation about campaigns or support for local people affected by MND.

This guide includes a template letter or tweet for you to send, encouraging candidates to pledge a message of support for people with MND and their carers. It also includes guidance for campaign volunteers on maintaining political neutrality during an election period.

If you have any questions, or for further discussion, please get in touch with us at campaigns@mndassociation.org.

Are elections happening in my area?

In May 2023 local government elections will be taking place in some areas of England and Northern Ireland¹. To find out if elections are taking place in your area you can use [the Electoral Commission website tool](#):

Simply enter your postcode and you'll be presented with information about your candidates once they have been officially nominated.

If a candidates' contact details are not listed on the website, try doing an internet search for a list of election candidates in your area. These details are usually hosted on local party websites. As these are often maintained by volunteers, it may take some research and patience to find the correct contact details.

¹ If you are based in Northern Ireland and would like further information on local elections there, contact Patrick Malone on Patrick.malone@mndassociation.org



We recommend contacting candidates from all political parties who are standing in the ***ward or division where you live*** (template provided below).

IMPORTANT: Please read the guidance (page 4 & 5) on campaigning during the pre-election period or 'purdah' before you take action.

See email/letter template on the next page. Do personalise your email as much as possible.

After the elections

Don't worry if you didn't get round to getting in touch with your election candidates. You still have time to influence newly elected or re-elected councillors. To find out who has been elected in your local wards/divisions you can visit the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors>.

The first 100 days (a bit like with the President of the USA) is also a key opportunity to raise awareness of MND and issues in your local area. New councillors will be keen to hear from their constituents and see how they can support you. They will have more time to meet with you too so you could try and set up a meeting (virtual or face-to-face) or attend surgeries (if allowed) to discuss what your ward councillors can do to improve the situation for people living with MND.

A conversation with your councillor could include:

- Introducing them to MND using the Association's [key messages](#).
- Explaining the Support MND Carers campaign to them using the talking points in the [Action Guide](#).
- Asking them to share the Support MND Carers report with the cabinet member with responsibility in this area and urge them to review processes locally, [as set out in this letter](#).
- Explaining the [Act to Adapt](#) campaign to them – additional updated material on this campaign will also be available after the election.

if you'd like any support meeting your local councillors please get in touch with your staff point of contact or with the Team at campaigns@mndassociation.org.

The MND Charter

As part of outreach to candidates and councillors it is useful to know if your council has adopted the MND Charter. You can check this on [the interactive map here](#) as well as find out more about the Charter.



Template email/letter to candidates

Dear <FIRST NAME> <LAST NAME>

I am contacting you as a local constituent and as the <INSERT VOLUNTARY ROLE> for the <INSERT BRANCH/GROUP NAME> of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

The local <INSERT BRANCH/GROUP NAME> is organised and run entirely by volunteers with the aim of supporting those in our community who are affected by motor neurone disease (MND), be they a patient, carer, family member, friend, or someone bereaved by the disease. <MENTION HERE IF YOUR COUNCIL HAS SIGNED THE MND CHARTER>

What is MND?

As you may know, MND is a fatal, rapidly progressing disease that affects the brain and spinal cord. MND leaves people locked in a failing body, unable to move, talk and eventually breathe. Six people a day die from MND in the UK.

As the disease progresses one of the primary concerns for people living with MND is the accessibility of their home. Most people with MND wish to remain in their homes for as long as possible but can find their home is no longer suitable to meet their increased needs and can end up feeling trapped because they can't move around easily or leave their home at all. [Fast access to home adaptations](#) – a local council responsibility - is therefore essential for people with MND.

Caring for somebody with a complex and progressive disease like MND is also an enormous responsibility which impacts carers – often family members - in multiple ways. Research conducted by the MND Association found MND carers are physically and mentally exhausted, unable to access breaks and impacted financially. Access to support from local authorities – [such as carer's assessments](#) - is crucial.

This issue is important to me because <INSERT A FEW LINES ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF MND HERE, IF APPLICABLE >

What you can do?

Please show your support by replying with a message pledging to take action, if elected, to ensure people with MND in our community and their carers can access the support they need. This small action will help to show that this issue matters to you and our council.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

<FIRST NAME> <LAST NAME>



Sample tweet to candidates

MND is a complex & progressive disease. < INSERT COUNCILLOR HANDLE> as my local candidate in < INSERT COUNCILLOR NAME > elections, will you pledge to support people with #MND if elected?

Let's make sure people with MND in our community and their carers can access the support they need!

...

Rules for campaigning during an election period

There are certain rules that apply to campaigning during an election period. The Charity Commission and Electoral Commission both set rules for charity campaigning. This note provides guidance on what these rules mean in practice, but we would urge you to read in full information that is available on charity campaigning during election periods on the following websites (see page 6).

There are three key things to bear in mind during an election period:

1. **Remain impartial** – at no time must your branch/group indicate its support for a particular candidate or political party. This includes activity on social media (see below) or for example displaying candidates’ campaign materials at meetings or events, or any sort of financial giving towards a candidate or party.
2. **Treat candidates equally** – if you invite a candidate to an event or ask them to support a campaign, you should at least invite or contact all the candidates from the main political parties* too. (Ideally you should approach all candidates, but this might not be practicable given limited volunteer capacity).

It doesn’t matter if only one or two candidates attend a meeting/support the campaign, as long as you can provide evidence that you contacted the others if you are asked.

3. **Be careful on social media** – social media is a great way of raising awareness of MND and seeking support from candidates for our campaigns. However please follow these simple rules:
 - We encourage you to use your branch/group social media accounts to post about a candidate you have met or who has supported a campaign, as long as your post is impartial i.e. it doesn’t call for people to vote for a specific party, endorse a candidate or party, or criticise a candidate/political party.
 - You can retweet/share a Twitter/Facebook post from a candidate as long as the tweet/Facebook post isn’t political in nature i.e. calls for people to vote for a specific party or criticisms of another candidate/political party. Be careful not to share posts with a political hashtag such as #VoteLabour.
 - NB If you have a personal social media account with no reference to the MND Association, you are able to post political tweets. However, this doesn’t apply to Trustees, who must remain impartial at all times.

The overarching message for branches, groups and campaigns volunteers is to use the local elections to raise awareness of MND as much as possible, but to remain impartial.

If you have any queries please contact us on campaigns@mndassociation.org



Further information

We encourage you to read in full further information that is available on charity campaigning during election periods on the following websites:

In England and Wales:

Charity Commission – [Charities, Elections and Referendums](#).

Electoral Commission – [Non-party campaigners](#)

The Charity Commission also publishes general guidance on campaigning for charities - [Campaigning and political activity guidance for charities](#)

In Northern Ireland - [Political activity and campaigning guidance for charities](#)